

BOS AGM July 1st 2015: Chair's report

This is our first full year with Kate as our Musical Director. During the year, we have seen old friends leave and welcomed new women. Under Kate's direction we have been learning and consolidating a wide variety of new songs and developing our collective confidence to sing them together without the pressure of too many public performances. Her confidence in us, her lightness of touch, sense of fun and calm good humour all make such a difference to our enjoyment and ability to learn the range of songs she writes, discovers and arranges for us. How lucky we are- thank you Kate.

The year began with an unexpected letter from Horizon informing us that we would need to find alternative premises to rehearse as the Church and its building were to close during 2015. Whilst we are sad that we will be leaving a place at which BOS has rehearsed since it began, we have decided to move quickly, although the venue may remain available for some months to come. We are delighted that, with help from Kate, Deena and others we have secured the Old Junior School in Sharrow. We think it will meet our needs perfectly from September 2015.

At Christmas, Renate organised an evening to herald the festive season, leading a group of BOS women to make a beautiful array of seasonal decorations and floral arrangements. Thanks Renate and helpers.

In March we had a memorable evening to celebrate International Women's Day. Kate suggested that we host a participative, multicultural event for women in conjunction with the Women's Conversation Club (led by River) at the Vestry Hall in Burngreave. As many of you will know, it was successful in bringing so many different, talented and spirited women and their children together to share food and good company and to celebrate women through song, dance, and drumming.

We enjoyed performances from many of Sheffield's communities and also took part ourselves. BOS' repertoire was challenging- many new songs, some in English. We sang, sometimes at great speed and in Arabic, and also got the audience to join us in song. It was a real collective effort with: River's conversation club; Kate's inspiration, connections and steady nerve; good publicity; the working and, on the day, kitchen parties that quietly made it happen and decorated the space; and the performers in the 'scratch' band with circle dancing which closed the evening. Thanks to everyone.

Another key occasion was the April Lockerbrook weekend in which over 20 BOS members took part, thanks to Lisa and the working party's skilful organisation and to Cathy's heading up the kitchen with a number of willing sous-chefs. In addition to the singing, good company and time outdoors enjoyed by all, Leni got people involved with making squares to contribute to what has turned out to be a very beautiful patchwork quilt to commemorate Palestinians killed by drones. Thanks Leni for your enthusiasm and for making it happen.

There were a number of significant birthdays, to the tune of specially-written songs for Jo, Kate and Izzy, courtesy of the brilliant bards, and accompanied, of course, by cake. Thank you bards.

At the time of writing, the weekend at Lesley's barn is in prospect and will, I am sure, have been a lovely afternoon and evening made up, in classic BOS fashion, of walks, talks, eating together and singing round a fire. Thank you Lesley for your generous hospitality and to those of you who organised it.

Carol Pickering - Chair